

# Logistics Central

Story and photos  
By Grant Sattler

## LSA Anaconda...

### Six-member FEST-A working to transform former Iraqi airbase into logistical hub for U.S. ops

The Combined Joint Task Force-7 Forward Engineer Support Team-Augmentation on Logistical Staging Area Anaconda is helping transform this former Iraqi airbase into an efficient logistical hub for the U.S. military presence in Iraq.

The six-member FEST-A, the third rotation of personnel from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Europe District to serve the CJTF-7 in Iraq, is transitional in the types of duties it has been performing. Initially assessing war-damaged, neglected, or looted facilities for repair estimates, the team is now largely engaged in project management, primarily for work to be done on or in the vicinity of LSA Anaconda.

This type of work is normally the purview of a Corps of Engineers Resident Office, explained FEST-A Team Leader Capt. Derek Ulehla. With more than 40 active projects, the team is busy supporting LSA Anaconda in the role of a Resident Office in addition to the normal FEST mission. That will continue until mid-January when a Resident Office will be formally established, Ulehla said. The FEST-A will fall under the Resident Office at LSA Anaconda.

"We anticipate as the remaining FEST supporting all of CJTF-7 that all of the upper end, technical engineering work, will come to us," Ulehla said.

Europe District will fill the

positions in the Resident Office at LSA Anaconda, with Maj. Kenneth "Al" Reed from Europe District slated as Resident Engineer, Ulehla said.

"The biggest challenge we're having down here is going from a FEST to getting million dollar projects built," Ulehla said. "We found we were good at assessments, but it's certainly a challenge taking it the next step and getting things constructed."

In addition to team leader

Ulehla, the FEST-A is comprised of senior civilian/master planner Ron Mott, planner/project manager Hunter Dandridge, civil engineer/project manager Bryton Johnson, environmental specialist/project manager Tammie Stouter, and AutoCADD technician/planner/project manager Derrick Walker, who joins the team from New York District.

Work can come directly from the

Divisions, CJTF-7, or 130th Engineer Brigade taskings, or the FEST-A members can find projects of interest themselves, Ulehla said. Of that work he estimates 35 percent directly supports the warfighter and 60 percent is construction on LSA Anaconda.

Ulehla said the CJTF-7 FEST-A has used its ability to engage Stateside engineers extensively, made possible by the TeleEngineering Communications Equipment-Deployable (TCE-D). "We've been using the heck out of



**Forward Engineer Support Team project manager Hunter Dandridge looks at a ventilation system cover on the roof of the wing of a former Iraqi air force hospital**

'reach back.' Probably as much as any office, or team, out there," Ulehla said. "Warren Neiden, Mobile District, takes the work we send him and farms it out to one of 10 base development teams, or to Europe District."

Typical of the shift in work emphasis, FEST-A Architect Hunter Dandridge from Europe District's Installation Support Branch, has worked on assessments and as a project manager.

His largest assessment was for two dozen buildings on the border with Saudi Arabia which are to be used by the Iraqi border guard. Dandridge assessed the looted buildings to develop a scope of work and work up a cost estimate using reach-back. The buildings included administrative space, barracks, and inspection facilities.

His largest project management job presently is the renovation of one wing of a bomb-damaged hospital on LSA Anaconda, he said. The 30th Medical Brigade will be erecting a modular hospital as a separate project on the site once the other wings are demolished. The remaining renovated wing will be used for administrative and logistical space.

"It's critical because the combat surgical hospital is in tents now with only 40 beds and a patient population of 15,000 soldiers. They are also using field generators, so they need a permanent facility," Dandridge said. "They want a building adequate to support a growing population."

Johnson said his major projects on LSA Anaconda are construction of a Class 8 warehouse for medical supplies, building a theater postal distribution facility, and construction of an 800,000 square foot concrete parking apron for both the Air Force and Army. The Class 8 is mechanically complicated because of refrigeration for blood supplies and security for narcotics, he said.

Ulehla said the biggest challenge for the FEST-A has been the Corps Distribution Center project because of efforts to get the project funded and built.

The CDC is a large asphalt parking lot where the convoys will come in and download their supplies which will be broken out and distributed to the units, he said. Close to \$8 million was approved for the horizontal

construction project but the challenge has been to get a contractor as all bids have come in too high.

Stouter's major projects include a water treatment plant, a waste water treatment plant, fuel bunkers, and a wash rack. In addition to these environmental-related projects, she has made a number of environmental recommendations to the Facility Engineer Team, or FET.

Balad Southeast, now LSA Anaconda, was constructed by a Yugoslavian firm in the early 1980s. "You can tell there have been a lot of [maintenance]workarounds, although the quality of the original construction seems reasonable," Ulehla said. "You can see that repairs haven't been done, or the right materials were never available. It appears the embargo hit this place pretty hard."

Due to the population of the base, around 15,000 soldiers and airmen, most people are housed in tents. Living conditions for troops, without plumbing or hot water, is less than comfortable, Dandridge said. "I give credit to them for keeping their morale high, and they put their lives on the line every day," he said. "They are really doing a good job."

"I'm glad to be able to support the cause of rebuilding Iraq,"

Dandridge said. "I feel really good about being here to make a difference. I could be comfortable sitting in my office. But it's the experience of a lifetime being over here."

Johnson agrees that being a part of the FEST is good experience. "I get exposed to a lot of projects I wouldn't get exposed to in the States or in Germany," he said. "I'm on the traffic safety board here [for example], providing input to them from reach-back, ... there are a lot of different types of projects."

"I like being able to serve the soldier," he said. "We do that in Germany, but this is much more direct and has a much faster impact, I think, putting life support together."



**This section of the existing Iraqi air force hospital on Balad Southeast, now Logistical Staging Area Anaconda, will be renovated to serve as administrative space and medical logistical storage for a modular hospital to be built as a separate project.**

